

NEW SERIES

• Price 1 dollar

• VOL. XX No. 3

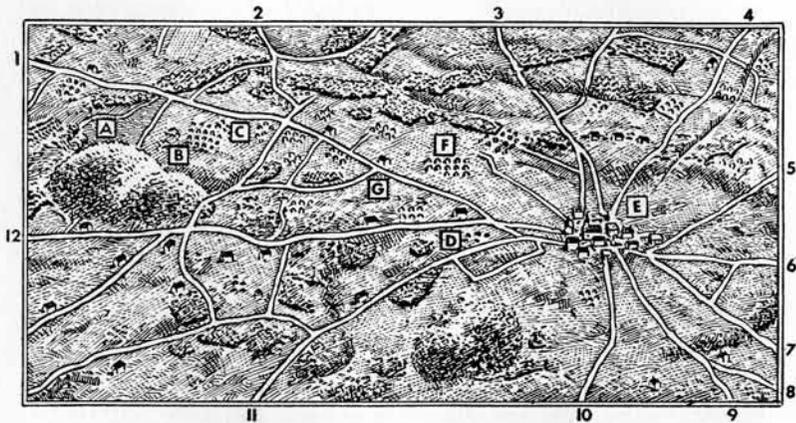
VERMONT  
*Quarterly*

A MAGAZINE OF HISTORY



July 1952

The PROCEEDINGS of the  
VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



THE BATTLEFIELD OF GETTYSBURG

“Just as we were making up our minds for the worst, some one shouted or rather yelled: ‘Here they come, General!’ Looking around we saw a column of infantry come swinging down the Taneytown road from the direction of Cemetery Hill, in close column of divisions, at a sharp double-quick, officers steadying their men with sharp commands. They came on as if on review. It was the most exciting and inspiring moment I ever passed, and every one yelled as if for dear life.”—Colonel Meade.\*

It is related that as General Doubleday saw the charge of Stanard’s brigade, he waved his hat and shouted: “Glory to God, glory to God! See the Vermonters go it!”\*

\* From *Vermont in the Civil War* by G. G. Benedict, 1888

1. Emmitsburg Road 2. Millerstown Road. 3. Hagerstown Road 4. Chambersburg Pike 5. Mummasburg Road 6. Carlisle Road 7. Harrisburg Road 8. Hunterstown Road 9. York Pike 10. Hanover Road 11. Baltimore Pike 12. Taneytown Road  
 A Round Top B Little Round Top C Devil’s Den D Cemetery Hill E Gettysburg  
 F Seminary Ridge G Cemetery Ridge



## VERMONT AT GETTYSBURG

By WILLIAM R. FOLSOM

*The name Gettysburg will echo in America's memory probably as long as there is an American memory which recalls moving events of the past. The battlefield was not only the scene of heroic deeds on the part of the Blue and the Gray, but also the scene of Lincoln's immortal address and the first healing of deep wounds resulting from the conflict. In this informal paper Mr. Folsom writes from intimate familiarity with the battlefield and the ebb and flow of the memorable battle there. This series dealing with Vermonters in battle began with "Vermont at Bull Run" in the Vermont Quarterly of January 1951. Editor.*

**B**EFORE taking up the story of the greatest battle of the Civil War and the part Vermont troops played in it, it might be well, perhaps, to consider, briefly, the status of the war and the conditions north and south in the summer of 1863, when the ragged veterans of Lee's army—joyous, confident and singing "Dixie"—waded across the shallows of the upper Potomac, and began their invasion of the North.

The colorful pageant of the early days of the war—with its blaring bands, fluttering flags and columns of marching men in blue—had given way to a realization of the immensity of the task before the nation, and the gloom, discouragement and grief following two and one half years of fierce and bloody struggle, bringing its burden of pain and sorrow to every tiny hamlet in Vermont. The North was not winning the war; it was losing it. The first battle, Bull Run, was a complete and tragic defeat for the Federal Army in which the 2nd Vermont Infantry played a small but heroic part.

Following Bull Run, the North saw clearly that immense effort and sacrifice must be made if the South was to be conquered.

General Winfield Scott, commander-in-chief of the Federal forces, was old, infirm and incapable of taking the field. He was a huge man, six feet four, with white whiskers, known in Washington circles as "Old Fuss and Feathers," who had had the unique distinction of having his pocket picked to the tune of \$800 at a White House reception. This may not be news today. However, a new military star appeared upon the horizon in the person of the youthful Major

General George B. McClellan, hailed everywhere as the "Young Napoleon." Possibly the young general considered the three-cornered hat not a bad fit; at any rate, he proceeded to organize and train the huge Army of the Potomac. As a former chief engineer of the Illinois Central Railway, McClellan was familiar with the management of large and important affairs, and this experience proved of much value in the moulding of the raw Army of the Potomac into an efficient fighting machine. His appointment as U. S. Military Observer in the Crimean War gave him new ideas regarding equipment and training. McClellan was a good organizer, but a poor fighter, always filled with a foreboding pessimism regarding the size of the enemy's forces. He lacked the headlong courage of Stonewall Jackson, and the smear artists of his day whispered that the General, "Little Mac," could not bear the sight of blood. In the spring of 1862, McClellan began his invasion of the South with the avowed purpose of capturing the rebel capital and bringing the war to an end, but his great army was overwhelmed and crushed in the swamps around Richmond and the disorganized and discouraged remnants were withdrawn from the Peninsula and sent north by sea.

Now began a long series of changes in command. Maj. Gen. John Pope, son of a former Governor of Illinois, who had had some success in the Mississippi campaign, came on from the West to take command of a new eastern army hastily thrown together, whose strategic purpose was to advance south, threaten Lee, and so take the pressure off McClellan, still not far from Richmond and clamoring for reinforcements. Now Pope did not endear himself to the High Command of the Army of the Potomac; he issued a General Order, saying that he came to them from the West where they "had always seen the backs of their enemies"—a statement strongly suggesting the boasting of Mr. Jefferson Brick in Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

Lee and Stonewall Jackson promptly proceeded to outflank Pope. Jackson got in his rear and his ragged, half-starved "foot cavalry" had a gargantuan feast on the vast supplies of the U. S. Quartermaster's Department. Pope's army was decisively defeated and found shelter behind the defenses of Washington.

Lee and his triumphant legions crossed the Potomac and began his first invasion of the North. Washington and the North had a severe case of the jitters, as Lee's brigades pushed on through Maryland. Washington now recalled McClellan to the command of the Army. The battle of Antietam was fought, and Lee retired across the Potomac, but McClellan was so slow in pursuit that Lincoln, in default of a better choice, removed McClellan from the command of the Army

of the Potomac, and appointed Gen. Ambrose Burnside, Commander of the Union Army—the third change of commanders in three months. As to the battle of Antietam, McClellan would, I think, have agreed with King Pyrrhus, who said of his defeat of the Roman Army, “One more such victory and I am entirely undone.” General Burnside was no Napoleon and proceeded to make the tragic mistake of attacking Lee’s veteran army, strongly entrenched on the heights south of the Rappahannock River. It is beyond comprehension why the General Staff at Washington allowed the battle of Fredericksburg to be fought at all; it was December, the roads well-nigh impassable; the Rebel position almost impregnable; the Union Army worn out and demoralized. As a result 12,000 Union soldiers lay dead or dying at the foot of Marye’s Heights.

An eye witness describes the scene when President Lincoln received the news of the appalling defeat at Fredericksburg: “I shall never forget that picture of despair; he held a telegram in his hands behind his back, he walked up and down the room, saying ‘My God, My God! What will the Country say?’ ” General Burnside has passed across the stage of history into the wings of oblivion, but we remember him chiefly, I think, for his type of whiskers—burnsides, or sideburns—they are not unknown in Vermont today. But Burnside was a faithful, loyal soldier and as such we remember him.

Among the critics of General Burnside’s strategy the most outspoken and vociferous was Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker, popularly known as “Fighting Joe.” Burnside retaliated by issuing the following General Order dated Jan. 23, 1863: “Gen. Joseph Hooker, having been guilty of unjust criticisms of the actions of his superior officers and for habitually speaking of other officers in disparaging terms, is hereby dismissed from the service of the U. S. as a man unfit to hold an important commission in a crisis like the present. This order is subject to the approval of the President of the U. S.”

This order was *not* approved by the President and on Jan. 26, Mr. Lincoln sent this remarkable letter to Gen. Hooker. [*This letter, I believe, has recently been sold for a very large sum. W.R.F.*] “I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac,—yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things, in regard to which, I am not quite satisfied with you—I think, that during Gen. Burnside’s command of the Army, you have thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did the great wrong to the Country and a most meritorious and honorable Brother Officer.—I heard of your recently saying that both the Army and the Government needed a Dictator.—Only those Generals who gain successes can set up as

Dictators—what I ask of you is military success, and I will risk the Dictatorship.”

After the disaster at Fredericksburg, the North was in the depths of despair. Greeley, editor of the *N. Y. Tribune*, was in favor of the mediation of a European Power and offered his services as mediator. The world in general thought that recognition from abroad would come at once.

Now an old, familiar scene is played once more. General Hooker was a likeable and spectacular commander and the morale of his army began to rise. His plan of campaign was excellent—on paper. No more frontal and fatal assaults; he would cross the Rappahannock at the upper fords, come down on Lee's exposed flank, drive him out of his strong position on Marye's Heights and force him to fall back on Richmond to save his army. General Hooker was supremely confident, and his boastings remind one of his unfortunate predecessor, General Pope. "I have the finest army on the planet," said General Hooker, "And God have mercy on Gen. Lee, for I shan't."

With two such consummate strategists as Lee and Jackson to oppose him, Gen. Hooker was foredoomed to defeat. While General Lee held off the Union columns, advancing towards Fredericksburg, Stonewall Jackson executed one of the most famous flanking operations of the war; moving at his accustomed high speed through the thick forest, he struck the unsuspecting right flank of the Union Army and crushed it. Had Jackson's attack been launched a few hours earlier, it is quite possible that the Union Army would have been driven to the river's edge and captured. But Fate intervened. Stonewall Jackson fell mortally wounded in the wilderness, and Lee had lost one of the greatest figures in the annals of the war.

Once more the beaten, demoralized Union Army retreated to its old camps on the north bank of the Rappahannock River.

The Confederate High Command now realized that the decisive hour of the war was near at hand.

General Lee decided to assume the offensive, to transfer the field of operations to northern territory. A victory in the field might give him possession of Washington and Baltimore. The Shenandoah Valley would give him a safe line of advancement, and, if necessary, of retreat, for the Blue Ridge range separated him from the enemy; at this time the morale of the Confederate Army was much higher than that of its adversary. The Shenandoah Valley was a rich farming region and General Lee could cut out much transportation and live off the land.

The Confederate government acted promptly with the hearty co-

operation of President Davis and the Cabinet; it was determined to invade the North. Lee, with every regiment he could muster (80,000 men), crossed the Potomac on June 25, 1863, in a heavy rain, the men shouting and singing "Dixie," and entered Maryland and Pennsylvania, confident of victory and a consequent peace with the North. If Lee was to force his enemy to relax his siege of Vicksburg, he must act quickly, draw the foe after him and bring to the North the hardships and horrors of war; this would have great effect on the peace parties there. "I shall," said General Lee, "therefore carry on the war in Pennsylvania without offending the sanction of a high civilization and of Christianity." And he succeeded in keeping damage to a minimum. There were few charges of plundering, but officers had difficulty in keeping bareheaded soldiers from snatching hats from civilians as the columns passed through the crowded streets of the little towns. The campaign strategy was to advance on Harrisburg and cut communication between the east and west. "When the enemy," said Lee, "hear where we are, they will make forced marches to interpose their forces between us and Baltimore and Philadelphia. They will come up (probably through Fredericksburg) broken down with hunger and hard marching; strung out in a long line and much demoralized when they come into Pennsylvania. I shall throw an overwhelming force on their advance; crush it; follow up the success; drive one corps back on another and by successive repulses and surprises, before they can concentrate, create a panic and virtually destroy this army."

When the news was flashed over the North that Lee with 100,000 men had crossed the Potomac and was marching north toward Harrisburg, there was widespread panic and consternation in city, village, and countryside. President Lincoln called for 100,000 militia from Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, and Ohio to serve for a month.

General Hooker hastily gathered his army together, and leaving his old quarters at Fredericksburg, he crossed the Potomac and marched north, covering Washington as he went along. Hooker asked that the Federal garrison at Harper's Ferry be sent to him as a reinforcement. General Halleck, Chief of Staff, refused, and General Hooker asked to be relieved of his command. Lincoln acted instantly. On June 28, at 3 o'clock in the morning, a messenger from General Halleck in Washington entered the hut of General George Gordon Meade and delivered an order relieving Hooker and placing Meade in command of the Army of the Potomac. This was the fifth change of commanders in six months; little wonder that the Army was demoralized. General

Meade was a veteran commander, with a good, if not brilliant record. General Hooker left for Baltimore within a few hours, giving Meade no intimation of any views he held, if any. Consequently, General Meade was left with a most difficult problem on his hands; but he acted promptly and wisely. He would march his army at its utmost speed northward toward Harrisburg, extending his wings as wide as he dared, until he met the enemy.

Now let us turn our attention to the Vermont troops who played a magnificent part in the great battle, now so near at hand.

After the Battle of Bull Run, the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Vermont Volunteer Regiments were formed into a brigade—known as the Vermont Brigade, the only brigade in the Union Army permanently known by the name of its state.

In October 1862, an order was issued to form a brigade composed of the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Vermont Volunteer Regiments, to be called the 2nd Vermont Brigade; its commander was General George J. Stannard of St. Albans. The 15th regiment was commanded by Colonel Redfield Proctor.

Pride stirs the heart when we read the record of George Jerrison Stannard: he was the first Vermont man to volunteer in the war. In April, 1861 he was made colonel of the 4th Vermont Militia, was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General for distinguished valor at Harper's Ferry and assigned to the command of the 2nd Vermont Brigade. On July 3, the last day of the battle of Gettysburg, General Stannard received the highest praise for his gallant attack on Pickett's flank, at which time he was severely wounded. He was wounded four times in battle, the last wound causing amputation of his right arm near the shoulder.

The 2nd Vermont Brigade marched 138 miles in six days and arrived at Gettysburg in time to close a dangerous gap in the lines on Cemetery Ridge.

Now the critical hour of the war was at hand. The Confederate Army must be pursued, overtaken, and brought to battle before it could capture the key cities of Harrisburg, Baltimore and Washington and bring the war to an end.

The Union Army pressed on at its utmost speed; a huge army of 100,000 men—cavalry, infantry and artillery hurrying on to battle. The various corps were widely separated and strung out in long lines. Once the enemy were brought to bay, concentration would be difficult. The weather was intensely hot, the country a series of ridges with long valleys between. (Nothing is hotter than a mountain valley in mid-summer). "All day long June 29," says the historian of the

13th Vermont Volunteers, "we marched through mud and water. General Stannard issued an order that no one should leave the ranks while on the march to get water. The weather was 90 degrees in the shade. We marched from dawn to sunset at our utmost speed." "The 13th Vermont Regiment," said Colonel Henry Clark, "did about the hardest fighting that was done on this great battlefield. In charging Pickett's flank, it contributed largely to the success of our arms at the critical point and captured more prisoners than it had men in its ranks."

One wonders if these Vermont boys (the average age of the soldiers in the Union Army was 23 years), when they threw themselves on the ground exhausted with their uniforms dripping with perspiration, dreamed of home, of Father coming in from the barn with a pail of milk, of Mother carrying the meat and potatoes from stove to table while the little girls drew up their chairs in eager anticipation. How dry their throats were from marching for hours in the choking dust! How they longed for the old spring in the back pasture with its clear bubbling water! Well, it was a nice dream at any rate, but this was war and blood and death. The sky grew light in the east; the bugles sounded, and they dragged themselves to their feet and formed up for the day's march. From headquarters came the orders: "Put the Vermonters ahead and keep the column well closed up"—a tribute to the native endurance of the Green Mountain Boys.

The main Confederate Army crossed the Potomac June 24th and 25th. Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania, was only 74 miles away. How different the countryside from war-ravaged Virginia! Pennsylvania was a rich, comfortable and pleasant land with its broad fields of clover, its fruited orchards and huge barns with overhanging eaves. The Pennsylvania Dutch were an industrious and progressive people and are today. A modern historian has noted the fact that our Pilgrim Fathers must have learned a lot about self-government from their eleven years' association with their Dutch neighbors in Holland, who worked hard, made money and spent that money on schools and hospitals, a cultured and kindly people, an inspiration to a forlorn band of refugees from Merrie England.

On marched the ragged divisions of General Lee's army, through this smiling and fertile land. No enemy in front or on flank. General Ewell with the advance had gathered and stored at convenient points welcome supplies for the hungry men in gray. General Ewell marched through Gettysburg and reached the Susquehanna River a little below Harrisburg. All had gone well with General Lee and the capital of the great State of Pennsylvania lay at his mercy just across the river.

On the night of June 28, the famous scout Harrison arrived at General Lee's headquarters with the alarming news that the whole Union Army had crossed the Potomac and was marching north with all speed in search of the enemy.

Fortune's scale had turned. Lee acted instantly. He stopped the movement on Harrisburg and began concentrating his army at the little village of Gettysburg, a center of several good roads leading west, north and east. The Confederate Army was confident and well in hand. A concentration of the Confederate Army east of the mountains would compel the Union Army to follow and thus abandon their threat to Lee's rear. Unfortunately General Lee did not know where his adversary was. General Stuart, commanding the Cavalry Corps, had been ordered to guard the right flank of the army as it marched northward into Pennsylvania. Apparently Stuart did not comply with the letter of his instructions, for from the twenty-fourth of June to the second of July, General Lee was without the service of the "eyes of the Army." Lee without Stuart was like blind Sampson feeling for the pillars of the temple. General Stuart and his cavalry, riding around the flank of the Union Army, captured a wagon train of supplies, 125 vehicles, within sight of Washington. Stuart decided to deliver these provisions to Lee's Army. This reduced his speed to a walk, and the gray cavalry did not make contact with Lee until the second day of the battle. On July 1, Stuart reached Carlisle, near Harrisburg, and was busy shelling the town when he received an urgent message from General Lee stating that the Confederate Army was at Gettysburg and had been engaged all day with the enemy and ordering him to return at once to that place. Units of the Confederate Army, marching to Gettysburg to procure a supply of much needed stores, encountered General Buford's dismounted blue cavalry west of the town and the battle of July 1st began.

While the great Union Army of nearly 100,000 men was streaming northward, cavalry, infantry, artillery, and trains, it is difficult to locate accurately the position of the Vermont troops in the battle. The 2nd Brigade of the 6th Army Corps was composed of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Vermont Volunteer Regiments—these are the troops who made the remarkable march of thirty-two miles in a night and day and arrived on the battlefield late in the afternoon of July 2nd and were held in reserve. On July 1, Stannard's Vermont Brigade of the 1st Corps was not with that Corps in the opening battle; it was six miles away and joined the 1st Corps in the evening on Cemetery Hill.

General Buford's dismounted cavalry held on bravely in the face of heavy odds until the arrival of General Reynolds with the 1st Corps.

For a time the battle went well for the Union troops. General Archer and part of his Confederate brigade had been captured and 1100 prisoners taken, but the enemy attacks grew fiercer. General Reynolds, one of the best officers in the Union Army, had been killed. General O. O. Howard, father of Harry S. Howard of Burlington, took command. Howard had about 21,000 men on the field, the Confederates 35,000. Howard was hanging on bravely; suddenly from out of the northeast came the boom of heavy guns, from the woods above Gettysburg appeared a long gray line of battle. The combined Confederate divisions struck the thin, hard-pressed Union lines in overwhelming force; the whole Federal line was driven back towards Gettysburg, the town captured, and 5000 prisoners taken. The Confederates had won a lucky but splendid victory. However, General Howard's forethought and wisdom saved the Union Army from imminent destruction. Above the town is a steep hill, called Cemetery Hill, as the town's cemetery is located there. Cemetery Hill was at the northern end of a long ridge, called Cemetery Ridge, running south and terminating in another hill named Round Top. General Howard posted his reserve artillery and Steinwehr's Division on Cemetery Ridge; this formed a rallying point for the broken Union forces. But help was at hand; one by one the scattered elements of the Union Army came up on Cemetery Ridge; and when General Meade arrived on Cemetery Hill about midnight, a long line of battle had been formed and the situation was well in hand. General Meade, riding old "Baldy" at his utmost speed through the sultry summer afternoon, heard far to the north the distant rumble of big guns and saw the ever increasing clouds of smoke rising ominously high in the still air. Perhaps the words of Wellington at Waterloo came to his mind, "The night or Blucher." However, the outlook was none too bright. The men were exhausted from marching day and night through suffocating heat, their morale was low; the advance divisions had suffered a sharp defeat; an exultant and powerful enemy confronted them. The forced march to Gettysburg is well and vividly described in the letters of young George Merryweather, a veteran of sixteen and a private in the 11th U. S. Infantry: "After a series of forced marches," he writes, "averaging 30 miles daily, we arrived at Union Mills—23 miles from Gettysburg under a temperature of more than 90 in the shade on the evening of July 1st. Hardly had we settled down, when the bugles sounded, [*You can almost hear the groans of those weary boys. W.R.F.*] and we again took up the line of march, reaching Gettysburg in the early morning.

"During this night march, during a temporary halt, I with some

comrades, visited a farm house adjacent to the road for the purpose of filling our canteens. A matronly woman appeared in the door and bade us come in. Passing through the kitchen, we were ushered into the dining room. Seated at a table were a number of officers; one of whom upon our entry, ordered us out; the good lady indignantly advised him that we were her guests; that she knew no difference in rank, that all who wore the blue were equally welcome at her table, and that he could depart at once!" How these boys must have enjoyed seeing the High Brass dusted off by a fat old Dutch woman whose heart was distinctly in the right place. As I have noted, George Merryweather was only sixteen. Many a lad of his age had chalked the figure eighteen on the soles of his shoes, gone before the recruiting officer and sworn that he "was over 18."

The Union lines extended three miles along Cemetery Ridge. At the southern end of the ridge, two miles from the Cemetery, was a steep hill, 600 feet high, locally known as Round Top; it was covered with timber to the summit. A short distance north of Round Top was a smaller hill called Little Round Top, bold and rocky, 300 feet high. Five hundred yards due west of Little Round Top, a bold rocky height, (the north extremity full of rocks) was Devil's Den.

On the morning of July 2, General Lee had good reason to be confident. General Ewell had decisively defeated the advance units of the Federal Army, had captured the town of Gettysburg, and taken thousands of prisoners. He knew the Federal Army was exhausted by forced marches in the mid-summer heat and that its morale was low.

Lee now determined to attack the Federal left flank with Longstreet's Corps and directed Ewell, when he heard Longstreet's guns, to make a diversion on the enemy right flank and turn the attack into a real assault if opportunity offered. Ewell, it will be recalled, had failed to take Cemetery Hill after the Federal advance forces had been driven through Gettysburg.

Jackson was dead in the forefront of battle. "I know not how to replace him," Lee wrote his wife. In the reorganization of the army, General Lee selected General Richard Ewell to command Jackson's old Corps. General Ewell had lost a leg at the battle of Groveton the summer before and was now able to walk with a wooden leg for the first time. He was forty-six years old, odd-looking, profane and quick tempered, but generous and kindly. He considered Stonewall mad, and once remarked that whenever he saw one of Jackson's couriers dashing up to headquarters, he expected an order to storm the North Pole. Of course, the shock of his amputation must have lowered his vitality and to some extent, impaired his judgment. "Jackson's speed,

daring and discipline," says Douglas Freeman, the great biographer of Lee, "were lost." Ewell had always had most explicit orders when serving under Jackson and was undecided what to do when Lee ordered him to storm Cemetery Hill "if practicable."

There has been much controversy concerning General Lee's strategy at Gettysburg, and some criticism. But it must be remembered that the Confederate Army had been recently reorganized, with new commanders who were strangers to their men and vice versa; furthermore, Lee's battle line was very long and communication between the wings was long and difficult with a small staff.

On the morning of July 2, the situation of the Union Army was well nigh desperate. General Sickles, in disregard of Meade's orders, had posted his men far out in front of the Federal lines on Cemetery Ridge—his center three-fourths of a mile in advance of his supports, thus causing a dangerous salient. The Union lines were thin and much extended, their concentration still not complete because of the torrid weather.

On the afternoon of July 2, General Warren, Meade's Chief of Engineers, rode to the top of Little Round Top and established a signal station on the summit. This hill was the key to the battlefield and not a Union soldier in sight to defend it! Once the Confederates occupied it, they could enfilade the whole length of Cemetery Ridge. Warren saw a Confederate column moving out from Devil's Den and marching straight for the vital hill! Help, however, was at hand; the old 5th Corps which had so gallantly covered the Union retreat at Bull Run, came in sight 400 yards away, advancing with all speed; a savage fight now took place; in an hour the Corps had lost 2000 men; the hill was held, but at a terrible cost.

A bloody, hand-to-hand struggle left the two Round Tops in possession of the Federals. The enemy still clung to the woods and rocks at the base of Round Top. General Meade, busy bringing reinforcements forward, had his horse, old "Baldy," shot under him. When darkness fell, the Confederates held the foot of both Round Tops, Devil's Den and its surrounding woods, and had possession of ridges on the Emmitsburg road through the valley, which gave excellent positions for the Confederate guns. There had been partial success at both left and center; reinforcements had come up.

All through the Gettysburg campaign, Lee and Longstreet, his senior infantry commander, had differed regarding the strategy to be employed. Longstreet, a stubborn and opinionated commander, favored a defensive policy—taking a good position and letting the enemy do the attacking. On the other hand, Lee was in favor of a direct

attack. He was in an enemy country, far from his base of supplies. His men were well fed and rested and jubilant over yesterday's victory. They were victors on many a hard-fought field; Lee loved them and believed them to be invincible. But Longstreet was obdurate; he urged General Lee to adopt his plan to move to the right and thus flank the Federal Army out of its strong position on Cemetery Ridge. This movement would place the Confederate Army on the road to Washington and between the Federal Army and the capital.

"I was much disappointed," said Longstreet, "when he (Lee) came to see me on the morning of the 3rd and directed that I should renew the attack against Cemetery Hill—probably the strongest point of the Federal line. I stated to Gen. Lee that I had been examining the ground and was much inclined to think that the best thing was to move to the Federal left."

"No," he said, "I am going to take them where they are—I want you to take Pickett's division and make the attack."

Longstreet sulks and delays; this is evident by the fact that it took him from daylight until 4 P.M. on July 2 to move his troops four miles and get them in position for assault. Meanwhile, the scattered divisions of the Union Army were coming in from the south and building up the long thin battle-line on Cemetery Ridge. It is easy to sit back and criticize the strategy of a battle that was fought ninety years ago. Perhaps the loss of the battle was due in some measure to General Lee's easygoing nature. He was essentially a gentleman; bickering and argument were repugnant to his feelings. Meanwhile, during all this delay the Union Army was growing hour by hour. Had Stonewall Jackson been in command of the Confederate Army, one brief, sharp order would have been given Longstreet, "Get in there and fight," but I believe that dyspeptic Deacon of the Presbyterian Church would not have used the words "like hell!"

On the morning of July 3, Lee came to a decision. He could not stay where he was on account of lack of supplies of food and ammunition; attacks on both wings of the Federal Army had failed. He would send his veteran divisions straight at the center of the Union lines on Cemetery Ridge. Reinforcements had come, and he had an abundance of artillery (150 guns) to protect attacking infantry. The objective of the assault was a small grove of chestnut oaks on Cemetery Ridge, locally known as "Ziegler's Grove." The artillery was to cover the assault by a massed bombardment of the enemy's position; infantry not to start until the guns had silenced the enemy batteries.

During the morning both armies lay quiet under a blazing sun until noon. Shortly before 2 P.M. a shell from the Confederate Whitworth

gun (made in England) shrieked across the valley; it was the signal for the opening of the battle. The Confederate guns on Seminary Ridge covered a mile and a half of ground. From Seminary Ridge to the little grove of chestnut oaks on Cemetery Ridge the distance was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles. "The hour cometh," saith the Scripture, "and now is."

General Lee formed his assaulting columns. It was a sweet and smiling valley across which the Confederate columns were to pass—violets and daisies among the green clover, field after field of ripening grain. It was harvest time, with Death the Grim Reaper.

Pickett's Division of Virginians—15,000 men with a front of 500 yards was to lead the way, supported on the right and left by Pettigrew's and Wilcox's divisions. They were the flower of Lee's army. The attacking force extended over a mile.

George Edward Pickett, commander of the assaulting column, rode out from the line. He was a picturesque and gallant figure with his long yellow curls hanging down to his shoulders, his cap on one side of his head, a brigadier general at thirty-eight. This was the critical hour. Success or failure, each hung by a thread. General Pickett had had a colorful life, was appointed to West Point from Illinois when he was only seventeen years old, his sponsor being a distinguished lawyer of the Illinois Bar—one Abraham Lincoln. General Pickett—like so many boys of his time—had had insufficient preparation and graduated last in his class at West Point; the General, however poor he may have been with the pen, did much better with the sword. He was cited for gallant conduct in the Mexican War; and when he looked into the grim faces of his veterans, he knew that wherever he went, they would go also. The roar of the guns had ceased.

It was a typical mid-summer afternoon. Down the long gray lines the blood-red battle flags scarcely stirred on their staffs.

As we look upon the jaunty figure of the young commander, Kipling's stirring battle lines come to mind.

*The word—the word is mine  
When the order moves the line  
And the lean, locked ranks  
Go roaring down to die.*

His (Pickett's brigades) lost their formation, says an eye witness, as they swept across the Emmitsburg Road. They pushed on toward the crest to merge into one crowding, rushing line many ranks deep. By an undulation of ground the rapid advance of the dense line of Confederates was, for a moment, lost to view; an instant after, they seemed to rise out of the earth and so near that the expression on

their faces was distinctly seen. Every foot of ground was occupied by men in mortal combat.

"It was arranged," said General Alexander, Lee's Chief of Artillery, "that I was to observe the fire and give Pickett the order to charge. The enemy's fire suddenly began to slacken, and the guns in the Cemetery limbered up and vacated the position. I wrote to Pickett, 'For God's sake, come quick, come quick or my ammunition won't let me support you properly.'" This recalls a somewhat similar note written many years after Gettysburg by a distinguished cavalry officer, General George A. Custer, at the battle of The Little Big Horn: "Benteen, for God's sake come quick, big village, bring packs."

In the gray of early dawn Pickett and his veteran division commander, Armistead, were talking over the coming assault. Armistead turned to Pickett and pulling a ring from his finger, said, "Give this to her, George, please, with my love." Pickett had recently become engaged to one of the most beautiful young women in Virginia, LaSalle Corbell.

When formations were completed, "Pickett rode to my headquarters," said General Longstreet, "and asked me if the time for his advance had come. Pickett said, 'Old Peter,' [*Longstreet's nickname*] laying his hand over mine and I said, 'I know, George, I know, but I can't do it, boy. Alexander will give the order.'"

A philosopher of the Ancient World (Aristotle, I think it was) once said that in every great tragedy there are two elements—awe and pity. We believe that there was little else than awe and pity in the hearts of those Union soldiers crouching behind boulders and stone fences along the slopes of Cemetery Ridge as they looked upon the most magnificent military pageant their eyes would ever see. Forty paces to the front rode an unseen horseman, the shadowy figure of Sacrifice. A mile long gray battle-line with nineteen blood-red flags above it moves down the slope of Seminary Ridge as though on dress parade; from the Ridge to the Union lines, one mile, the attacking force will have to descend one ridge, cross a valley and ascend another ridge. One hundred guns are registered on that valley, there is no cover; they must face a terrific artillery fire of shells, then canister as the range grows shorter, then concentrated rifle fire as the charging lines approach the crest of Cemetery Ridge. It seems like madness, like Fredericksburg reversed. The grandeur and majesty of that scene still stir the heart after ninety years have come and gone, leaving memories of Parsifal and the Knights of the Holy Grail marching to prayer.

Kemper's Confederate Brigade on the extreme right is suffering

greatly from the flanking fire of two Vermont regiments; men fire into each other's faces, not five feet apart. There are bayonet thrusts, saber strokes, pistol shots, yells, curses. "Take them on the flanks," orders General Stannard. The 13th and 16th Vermont regiments move forward and pour a deadly volley into the backs of the Confederate troops. They rush on to drive home the bayonet; the Confederate lines waver; thousands throw down their arms.

Now on come the battle-lines; shells tear great gaps through them, dead and dying men are everywhere, the wheat stubble is red, still the same measured advance, rifles at right shoulder. Now the big guns shift to canister and grape and a blast of rifle fire comes from the Union line; it seems a miracle that flesh and blood could face that storm of steel. The men mount the slope, double time is now the order. Two hundred and fifty yards to the crest; 100 yards to the hastily built up wall. One hundred yards! Many men have run that distance in ten seconds, but these charging men are exhausted from the heat, the steep climb and excitement. "Fire!" comes the command, and the gray line opens fire for the first time. Only twenty-five yards to the crest! The Union riflemen behind the wall see through the smoke the fierce bearded faces, the glittering bayonets of their foes.

Twenty-five yards to go, but the disciplined ranks are becoming a disorganized mass. General Armistead who has led his division, his cap on the point of his sword, is over the wall, but his cap is now down to the hilt of his waving sword. He reaches the crest and falls dead, his hand on a Union gun. General Doubleday orders Stannard's Vermont Brigade to charge Pickett's right flank. Pickett's supports fail him. Two of Stannard's Vermont regiments again charge Pickett's demoralized flank. The remaining handful fling down their arms, some flee. The Confederate lines become a confused mass of struggling men, fighting hand-to-hand. Oh, for a supporting wave of infantry and the crest would be won, but there were no supports. The attack has failed, the survivors sullenly fall back down the slope. Two-thirds of Pickett's men lay dead or mortally wounded.

"During Pickett's charge," says the historian of the 13th Vermont Volunteers, "Gen. George J. Stannard ordered the Brigade to 'Change front forward on first company'; this brought his Brigade on Pickett's flank at short range, their fire killed a thousand of Pickett's men in 20 minutes. We captured nearly all that survived of Pickett's Division. Distinguished officers of both armies who witnessed Pickett's charge, gave the credit to Gen. Stannard and the Vermonters in saving the day." General Stannard was severely wounded in this attack. General orders direct that on the flags of each of the regiments of Stannard's

Brigade be inscribed the word "Gettysburg." Long years after the war, General Lee said, "If I had had Stonewall Jackson with me, I would have won the Battle of Gettysburg," General Meade might well have said, "Without the Vermont Brigades, I would have lost the Battle of Gettysburg."

Pickett's charge at Gettysburg has gone down in history as the high light of the battle, but there was another charge made in that battle, little known perhaps, almost forgotten, but fully equal in courage, in discipline, in headlong valor, in sacrifice, to Pickett's immortal assault. This charge, known as Farnsworth's charge, was made by units of a famous regiment, the 1st Vermont Cavalry.

It was near 4 o'clock, Pickett's charge had failed; his men streamed back in demoralized fragments toward their own lines, when it appeared that Pickett's charge had been crushed. General Judson Kilpatrick, commanding the Union Cavalry Corps—hard-riding, hard-eyed, hard-boiled "Little Kil," sent his 1st Brigade, under General Farnsworth on a charge through the infantry detachments still clinging to their positions on the Confederate right flank.

The 1st Vermont was one of the crack regiments of the Union Cavalry; its record was impressive, a 12-company regiment of 1200 men. Four months after Bull Run it was mustered into the U. S. Service. The men were mounted on Morgan horses, horses strong of bone from the Vermont limestone ridges on which they had grazed; strong in courage from the high hills where they had been born. The regiment fought all through the war and was still fighting at Appomattox Court House when Lee surrendered. A part of the regiment rode with Ulric Dahlgren in his famous raid upon Richmond which cost him his life; it was at Yellow Tavern where Jeb Stuart was killed. Three medals were awarded it for gallant service.

The 1st Vermont Cavalry charge started about 5 P.M. on the last day of the battle. As General Farnsworth rode to the front of the Vermont line to lead that mad charge, the memory of a small prayer might have come to his mind: "A short life in the saddle—Lord, not a long life by the fire."

John W. Bennett, Lieut. Col. of the 1st Vermont Cavalry, said at the dedication of the monument to Major Wells at Gettysburg: "Gen. Farnsworth said (to me): 'Major, I do not see the slightest chance for a successful charge.' " Later on, at General Kilpatrick's headquarters, General Farnsworth reviewed the situation which did not look promising. General Kilpatrick said: "Well, somebody can charge." Farnsworth's lips instantly turned white, and he replied: "If anybody can charge, we can, sir." Col. Bennett adds: "My recollection is that Gen. Farnsworth with Major Wells at his side led

the column (about 120 men) as it swung into the open field, swept by shot and shell."

It brings back memories of Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade,"

*Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of Hell,  
Rode the six hundred.*

At Gettysburg the 1st Vermont Cavalry detachment charged nearly a mile into the enemy lines, receiving the fire of five regiments of infantry and two batteries, leaving its leader dead within the enemy lines—the only general officer so to die. "The behavior of the horses was admirable," said Capt. Parsons of the 1st Vermont Cavalry, "never refusing a fence, they carried their riders over rocks, fallen timber and fences that the boldest hunter would hardly attempt today."

Major William Wells became Maj. Gen. William Wells and received more promotions than any other Vermont soldier during the war. Major Wells led his men in fifty engagements and as brigade and division commander, in eighteen others. A few days after his memorable charge at Gettysburg, he was wounded by a saber cut; on Sept. 6 he was again wounded by a shell.

At the grand Review of the Army of the Potomac in Washington, May, 1865, General Wells led the advance of the Cavalry Corps—a fitting tribute to Vermont's great soldier.

There is a monument to General Wells, in Battery Park in the city of Burlington. The age of this veteran warrior was just twenty-three! The Civil War, however, produced other notable youthful commanders. Captain Henry Kyd Douglas, the youngest member on Stonewall Jackson's staff, was twenty-two, as was also Lieut. Bennett H. Young of the 8th Kentucky Cavalry, who led the raid on St. Albans in 1864, causing great consternation in that little city and severe financial loss—the raiders carrying off some \$200,000 taken from three banks.

Major Wells twice told General Farnsworth that the charge ought not to be made. No more gallant or desperate charge took place during the war. Riding over stone walls, fences and rocks and through woods, cutting through and riding down the Confederate skirmishers, the men came under heavy rifle and artillery fire. Recoiling from this fire with heavy loss, they turned to their left and rear, and were repulsed.

The Confederate General Robertson in his memorial address said, "All who know the ground over which 2 battalions of your regiment

were ordered to charge must conclude that starting your comrades unsupported on such a charge was an inexcusable military blunder. Ground thickly strewn with granite boulders, thickly studded with trees, and covered with undergrowth, your comrades had to advance upon trained Confederate soldiers over ground where it was impossible to keep an alignment and upon an enemy skilled in the use of rifles and taking advantage of cover."

The great struggle at Gettysburg was over, the armies gone, only the dead remained.

Perhaps from these young men, untimely dead, there might have come another Turner and a hillside of crimson glory awaiting in the stillness the white robe of Death; another Whistler, and the face of a beloved Mother, coming out of the shadows of Time, serene, sweet, patient, with all the subtle sorrow of old age; another Thoreau, lover of all wild things; another Lincoln, writing another immortal Gettysburg Address.

These lads lie in the tangled undergrowth of the Wilderness; in the swamps of the Chickahominy where the mockingbirds sing in the moonlight; along the sunken road at Antietam; upon the ridge of Gettysburg. They gave up the little things of their brief lives—God's happy gifts. Never again would they walk down the village street in the summer dusk, hand in hand with some fair-haired girl; never again steal through a golden woodland with ready gun and ear alert for the whirring partridge; never again walk up the narrow, drifted road and see, from the hilltop, the light in the kitchen window, shining out across the snow.

Look at the Civil War monuments on many a Vermont village green; at their top the Union soldier with pancake forage cap, musket, bayonet and military cape. On the sides of these monuments are the names of the young men who perished in the flaming inferno of the Wilderness or fell in glory at the foot of Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg. Such is the tragedy of war!

The Civil War was fought by young men,—young men, who

*Poured out the wild, sweet wine of Youth,  
Gave up the Life to be.*

Young men who

*Gave their golden youth away,  
For Country and for God.*

O Vermont Soldiers of Long Ago, wherever you may lie, *Requiescat in pace*—rest in peace, the Peace that passeth understanding.

May the lines of a great poet be your Requiem!

*When Earth's last picture is painted,  
And the tubes are twisted and dried,  
We shall rest—and faith we shall need it,  
Lie down for an aeon or two,  
Till the Master of All Good Workmen  
Shall put us to work—*anew.*"*

May these words of the greatest soldier of our day remain forever upon the altar of our hearts!

*Only those are fit to live  
Who are not afraid to die.*

